

## Reproductive behaviour of Russia's population in the transition period

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July 21st, 1994

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**Valentina Bodrova**

## **Reproductive Behaviour of Russia's Population in the Transition Period**

**Bericht des BIOst Nr. 15/1995**

### **Kurzfassung**

#### *Vorbemerkung*

In Rußland ist die demographische Situation seit vielen Jahren schwierig. Sie wird heute gekennzeichnet durch anhaltenden Geburtenrückgang, der sich in den neunziger Jahren beschleunigt; steigende Indikatoren der Mortalität, besonders bei Männern im arbeitsfähigen Alter und bei den nicht natürlichen Todesursachen; dauerhaft hohe Kindersterblichkeit, die weiter ansteigt; zunehmende Ehescheidungen bei rückläufigen Eheschließungen; steigende Anzahl der Alleinerziehenden, die gegenwärtig 4 Millionen Kinder versorgen; seit 1992 ist ein tatsächlicher Bevölkerungsrückgang zu beobachten, es sterben mehr Menschen als Kinder geboren werden.

#### *Ergebnisse*

Die auf eine geringe Kinderzahl gerichtete reproduktive Orientierung der überwiegenden Mehrheit der Bevölkerung wird zunehmend ungünstiger beeinflusst von den gegenwärtigen sozio-ökonomischen und politischen Verhältnissen.

Im Ural und in den nordöstlichen Gegenden Rußlands waren die auf die Reproduktion bezogenen Einstellungswerte am niedrigsten.

Der Bevölkerung wird bewußt, daß ohne radikale ökonomische Reformen und politische Stabilität kaum Vertrauen in die Zukunft gewonnen werden kann und auch keine Aussichten bestehen, während der nächsten zwei oder drei Jahre genügend Einkommen für den Familienunterhalt und die Erfüllung eines Kinderwunsches zu erreichen.

Die Bevölkerung erwartet nicht, daß ihre Einstellung zur Realisierung von Kinderwünschen durch existierende oder vielleicht zu erwartende staatliche Hilfen beeinflusst werden könnte. In der öffentlichen Meinung drückt sich Angst davor aus, die wünschenswerte und den persönlichen Verhältnissen angemessene Kinderzahl zu bekommen, weil das Vertrauen in die Zukunft fehlt und ein ausreichendes Einkommen für Familien mit Kindern nicht gewährleistet ist.

Die unter den gegenwärtigen Verhältnissen gewährten staatlichen Hilfen für Familien mit Kindern sind keine Maßnahmen einer demographischen Politik. Es handelt sich vielmehr um Sozialhilfemaßnahmen, die lediglich auf die Gewährleistung des für das Überleben der Familien unumgänglichen Grundbedarfs gerichtet sind.

Zur genaueren Ermittlung der Interessen der Familien mit Kindern in verschiedenen Bevölke-

rungsgruppen unter den sich rapide ändernden Verhältnissen und zur Erfassung allfälliger Veränderungen der auf das reproduktive Verhalten bezogenen Einstellungen müßten Studien wie die hier vorliegende jährlich wiederholt werden.

## I. The Demographic Problem

**The demographic situation in Russia has long presented a complicated picture. At the present time, it is characterized by an accelerating decline in fertility in the nineties; a rise in the mortality indices, especially among men of working age and deaths of non-natural causes; stabilization of infant mortality indices at a high level; a rise in childbirth mortality; an increase in the number of divorces, coupled with a drop in the number of marriages; an increase in the number of single parents, who are now rearing about 4 million children under age; an absolute reduction in population numbers in the country since 1992.**

### *Evolution of Fertility*

Over the last thirty years, the general trends in the fertility evolution in Russia were its slow decline and, later, stabilization at a low level; both processes were deformed by demographic waves, current economic as well as social factors, and demographic policy measures.

In the fifties, Russia recorded from 2.8 to 2.5 million births per year. In the period from 1960 to 1968, the number of births fell sharply and, in 1968, there were slightly more than 1.8 million births. Then, fertility rose again slightly. Thus, in the second half of the seventies, the number of births was around 2.1 or 2.2 million per year. A new rise in fertility in the early eighties produced as many as 2.5 million births in 1987 (the absolute maximum since 1961), before the present unparalleled drop in fertility took place.<sup>1</sup> In 1991, there were 1.8 births; in 1992, 1.6; while in 1993, there were only 1.4 births.<sup>2</sup> This dramatic fall in the number of births in 1992 and 1993 was one of the main causes of the decline in the population during those years.

Certainly, in the nineties, this fall in the number of births was due to the decreasing numbers of women aged 20 to 30 (this age group accounts for as much as 70 percent of the total number of births per year). The curve for the number of births since 1987 repeated almost exactly the curve reflecting the number of women of this age group in the sixties (which, in turn, was, at least partly, an "echo" of the fertility during the Second World War period). Some displacement of the second curve was due to the fact that this was not the only cause of the decrease in the number of births. From 1989 to 1993, the number of women in the main childbearing age group decreased by 1,290,000 (12%), while the number of births decreased by 573,000 (27%). This means that, in addition to structural factors, a considerable part of the decrease in the number of births was due to a decline in the intensity of childbearing, i.e. to a decline in fertility itself. As to the dimensions of this decline, one can gain an idea of its magnitude on the basis of the evolution of the general fertility rate (average number of children born per woman). Since the middle of the sixties, this has been fluctuating around the level of 2.0.<sup>3</sup>

In the eighties, these fluctuations were at their widest. In 1979/80, the general fertility rate related to the entire population of Russia fell to its lowest level in all the post-war period (1.89); in 1986/87, it

<sup>1</sup> O polozhenii semei v Rossiiskoi Federatsii (The Situation of the Family in the Russian Federation). Moskva: Yuridicheskaya Literatura, 1994, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Demograficheskii ezhegodnik Rossiiskoi Federatsii (Demographic Yearbook of the Russian Federation). Moskva: Goskomstat Rossii. AO "Innomarket", 1994, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> O polozhenii ..., p. 17.

again fell sharply to 1.89. Subsequently, a further sharp drop took place: to 1.73 in 1991 and 1.55 in 1992.<sup>4</sup> At present, even in Western Europe, there are only few countries with a lower fertility level (Austria, Germany, Italy and Spain).

It should be noted that, since the second half of the sixties, population reproduction has been taking place in Russia at or even below the replacement level; in urban areas, it is already below the replacement level, while in rural areas it is still above. Nevertheless, even here it is rapidly turning to be below the replacement level.

### *Illegitimate Fertility*

The fertility level in Russia is determined mainly by married couples. Nevertheless, some rise in illegitimate fertility is to be observed in recent years.

The evolution of the number of children born in and out of wedlock is not the same: from 1983 to 1987, the total increase in the number of births amounted to 13.5%; in the same period, the number of children born in wedlock increased by 11.1%, while the number of those born out of wedlock grew by 33.6% (Dr. G.A. Bondarskaya). From 1987 to 1992, the number of children born in wedlock decreased by 44.3%, while the number of those born out of wedlock dropped only by 14.2%. In 1992, the number of births out of wedlock made up 17.2% of the total number of births.

### *Family Planning, Abortions*

*Even today, the main and the most easily accessible method of family planning in Russia remains the same: legal and illegal induced abortions. According to official data, both the absolute and the relative number of induced abortions is exhibiting a tendency to decline. Nevertheless, these estimates must be treated with caution, since it is very probable that, due to a number of causes, abortion records are rather incomplete. But even this understated information about the number of abortions still makes it possible to assert that Russia is still the absolute world leader in this field. In 1992, the official records registered 3.5 million induced abortions (98 per 1000 women of 15-49 years, or 225 abortions per 1000 live births and stillbirths).<sup>5</sup> In the Ukraine, the corresponding indices are: 57 and 164; in Estonia, 64 and 117; in Hungary, 38 and 72; in Sweden, 20 and 30; in France, 13 and 21; in the Netherlands, 5 and 20.<sup>6</sup>*

### *Length of Life*

*The present period in the evolution of mortality and longevity in Russia started in the mid-sixties. Before that, there was a steady decline in mortality. In particular during a relatively short period from 1950 to the mid-sixties, infant mortality rates fell from 88 to 25 per 1000 births.<sup>7</sup> The life expectancy at birth rose to 64 years for males and 73 years for females. Contrary to these trends, since 1964/65, instead of rising, the length of life began first to stagnate and then to fall, first of all in*

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<sup>4</sup> Demograficheskii ezhegodnik ..., p. 73.

<sup>5</sup> O polozhenii, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



the case of males. These trends were effective into the early eighties. The lowest level of length of life was reached in 1979/80: 61.5 years for males and 73 years for females. Even more, the length of life for the male population in rural areas fell to a level unparalleled in any developed country: 58 years (1977/78). This drop in life expectancy was related almost exclusively to the rise in mortality due to accidents, poisoning and trauma among young and middle-aged persons, as well as a mortality rise due to cardiovascular diseases.

At the beginning of the eighties, the fifteen-year trend towards lower life expectancy changed to one of slow rise. In 1985/87, this process gained some reinforcement and more strength as a result of the anti-alcohol campaign. In two years, the length of life grew by 2.6 years for males and by 1.2 years for females. Nevertheless, as early as in 1987, the decline in mortality ended and a tendency to return to the previous level (which had existed before 1985) became evident. Since 1988, the average length of life has been falling again, and this is still the present day reality. This drop in the length of the life was especially dramatic in 1992: the male population lost 1.5 years and the female population 0.5 years. In 1993 the length of life was 58.9 years for males and 71.9 for females.<sup>8</sup> What is more, for many years the length of life in this country was the worst recorded in any economically developed country (the lowest of all in the case of males and one of the lowest for females). The decline in life expectancy was a result of rising mortality in a number of age groups, especially among young and middle-aged males. Mortality of the elder population was growing at a slower pace, while the general tendency of infant mortality was to go down slowly.

### Infant Mortality

*In the beginning, the rise in mortality was not common to all age groups, and, for instance, infant mortality continued to decline for some time; in 1990, it was 14% lower than in 1984.<sup>9</sup>* Contrary to this, the infant mortality level started to go up again as of 1991, both among the urban and among the rural population; in 1992, it was higher than in 1989: 18 deaths per 1000 births.<sup>10</sup> Compared with present-day Western standards, the infant mortality level in Russia is very high. In order to appreciate the magnitude of the stagnation in this field in recent decennia, it would be useful to compare the evolution of infant mortality in Russia and in several Western countries.

The actual lag between the infant mortality level in Russia and in highly developed countries is even greater because of the different criteria applicable to the recording of newborn deaths. The 1993 transition to adopting the universally recognized international criteria would give higher rates of infant mortality (20 to 25% higher, according to WHO estimates).

It is interesting to note that the 1993 infant mortality rise depends on exogenous causes of death, i.e. those that can be eliminated. On the basis of information from an eleven-month period in 1993, as compared with the information from the corresponding period of the previous year, mortality of newborn children due to infectious and parasitic diseases rose by up to 26%, while the figure for accidents was 21% higher and the figure for respiratory diseases was 20% higher.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Demograficheskii ezhegodnik ..., p. 224.

This is a symptom of a precarious situation in the very system of child protection, a symptom of a troublesome socio-economic and epidemiological situation, of a deteriorating system of child care and nutrition.

Even so, the introduction of new criteria for recording newborn deaths did not produce any immediate increase in infant mortality figures. This means that the new recording system for vital statistics has not yet been introduced full scale. Since 1991, a new rise in mortality among children aged 0 to 14 has taken place. More than half of these died from trauma, accidents and poisoning.

In society, attention to demographic processes is growing; people are expressing anxiety about the future development of the country's population; forecasts of population numbers are constructed simply by extrapolating, without allowance for recent trends in the reproductive behaviour of the Russian population.

Since the demographic situation in the country is determined in the first instance by changes in fertility rates, in our opinion research into the population's reproductive tendencies is important with a view to understanding and forecasting fertility in the country, for elaborating a long-term conception for demographic and family-oriented policy.

In the period 1990-1994, VCIOM has conducted a number of studies concerning the demographic problems of Russia and the former USSR with the aim of elucidating the reproductive orientations of Russia's population.<sup>12</sup>

## **II. Methods, Goals of the Surveys**

The first survey on the reproductive orientations of the population was conducted in July 1991, the second in September-October 1992. In both surveys the sample totality was about 1,350 persons (1991 - N=1,314; 1992 - N=1,357). The third survey, the results of which are analyzed here, was conducted from late March to late April 1994 among the urban and rural populations of the following regions of Russia: Northern, North-Western, Central, Volga-Viatka, Central Black Earth, Volga, North Caucasian, Urals, West Siberian, and Far Eastern.

The 1991 survey was conducted under conditions when Russia was still a part of the USSR, six months before the beginning of the avalanche liberalization of prices for all kinds of foodstuffs, industrial goods, and services. The 1992 survey took place under conditions when the Russian population had already been feeling the pressure of price liberalization and inflation processes for 9 months, with wage increases and the social protection of the most under-privileged groups of the population lagging behind. The survey conducted in March-April 1994 took place under conditions of further deterioration of the economic situation, and of the lag between the rise in family incomes and increasing prices for foodstuffs and everyday services, under conditions when a real threat of mass bankruptcy of enterprises and a corresponding rise in the scale of unemployment was emerging.

The aim of all three surveys was to ascertain the ideal, desired and expected number of children as

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<sup>11</sup> Statisticheskii ezhegodnik Rossiiskoi Federatsii 1992 goda (The Statistical Yearbook of the Russian Federation in 1992). Moskva: Goskomstat Rossii, Respublikanskii Informatsionno - Izdatelskii Tsentr. 1993, p. 120.

<sup>12</sup> The results are unpublished and stored in the VCIOM data pool "Reproductive Behaviour of Russia's population".

stated by different generations of people interviewed and to elucidate factors which, in people's eyes, favour or hinder convergence of the desired and actual numbers of children.

The level of the birth rate is ultimately determined by the number of children families have, which is a result of their reproductive behaviour. The number of children in a family is closely connected with value orientations, motivation for childbirth, stability of the marriage, choice of this or that scenario of reproductive behaviour under the influence of economic conditions, the work effort, financial and material resources required to maintain and bring up children in a family.

By controlling the number of its children, a contemporary family achieves the "economically rational number of children"\*) , i.e., a coordination between a certain number of children on the one hand and the consumer and productive interests of the household on the other, and preserves the objectively conditioned magnitude of expenditure on childbirth and rearing. The latter is called the price of equilibrium or the economically rational price of "child production".

A study of reproductive behaviour from the viewpoint of the so-called new economic theory of the family makes it possible to a certain extent to understand the trends of future changes in reproductive orientations by number of children and to identify possibilities for controlling the birth-rate by means of social, family or demographic pronatalistic policies.

### *Interviewing*

The sampled totality was about 4,000 persons (N=3,776). The object of study - the population aged 16 years and older. The sampled totality is representative of both the urban and the rural population. In each stratum, PSEUDO (urban settlements and rural districts) were selected with a probability proportional to the numbers of the adult population residing in them. In all, 121 sampling points were included in the sample (92 urban settlements and 29 rural districts). At the second stage of sampling, households were selected within the chosen settlements. The survey was carried out by random route sample. The route was randomly selected from a list of streets in a given settlement. At the third stage, the interviewer selected a respondent of the nearest birthday within each chosen household. Interviewers visited each address up to 3 times. Personal face-to-face interviewing for this survey were conducted by trained interviewers at the respondent's home, 10-12 (in the last resort up to 15) interviews per interviewer. In all around 150 interviewers took part in the survey. 10 per cent of the questionnaires were checked by means of a callback or by telephone.

## **III. Results of the Study**

### *The Population's Concepts of the Ideal, Desired, and Expected Number of Children*

First, let us cite definitions of the concepts of ideal, desired, and expected number of children.

The ideal number of children is an individual notion of the best number of children in a family in general, without regard for any concrete life situation and personal preferences.

The desired number of children is the number of children that an individual would prefer to have in

his/her family, proceeding from his/her own intentions, without regard for concrete circumstances of life and individual biography.

Though in real life the expected number of children in a family does not always coincide with the actual one, nevertheless the birth rate is to a considerable extent determined by the reproductive plans of a family and person, which, according to many scholars, remain quite stable during the reproductive period of life.

Table 1

The Dynamics of Indices of Ideal, Desired, and Expected Number of Children in 1991-1994

Russia in general	Number of children									Total fertility-rate		
	Ideal			Desirable			Expected					
	1991	1992	1994	1991	1992	1994	1991	1992	1994	1991	1992	1993
	2.10	1.53	2.02	2.25	1.96	1.65	1.77	1.33	1.08	1.73	1.55	1.4
Incl. by gender: Male	2.21	1.45	2.00	2.29	1.93	1.68	1.94	1.30	1.08			
Female	2.02	1.59	2.04	2.22	1.99	1.63	1.68	1.41	1.08			

The ideal number of children was ascertained from the answer to the question "Speaking about an "ideal family", what number of children do you think to be proper for one?" On the average for the totality of people interviewed in Russia the answer was 2.02, while for males this index was somewhat lower than for females: 2.00 and 2.04 respectively. Another correlation is noted in the indices of the desired and expected number of children: the indices of the desired number of children are somewhat higher for males than for females: 1.68 and 1.63 respectively. The indices for the expected number of children are equal for both males and females (1.08 and 1.09 respectively).

Respondents' answers to the question about the ideal number of children in a family make it possible to discuss, first of all, their concept of the social norm for the number of children.

Somewhat more concrete characteristics of the reproductive preferences of a respondent can be obtained from the desired number of children (in reply to the question "How many children, including those already born, do you want to have, providing all necessary conditions are met?"). In this survey this index turned out to be lower than the ideal number of children at an average, for the totality of those interviewed in Russia, of 1.65, being 1.63 for females, and 1.68 for males.

The most concrete index (and, obviously, the most acceptable for forecasting) is that of the expected number of children. In the 1994 survey, this was, on an all- Russia average, 1.08: 1.08 for males and 1.09 for females. During the period 1991-1994, *it decreased from 1.77 to 1.08*, i.e., by almost 40% (see Table 1). In essence, the index of the expected number of children in 1994 was 2 times lower than the replacement level of reproduction of generations.

Reproductive orientations are differentiated depending on various socio-demographic characteristics.

The data of the survey, "Reproductive Behaviour, 1994", enable us (with a certain degree of conditionality) to judge the change in reproductive behaviour at transitions from one generation to another.

### *Reproductive Orientation by Age and Sex*

Based on the results of this survey, the index of the ideal number of children for respondents of age under 29 years differs slightly from the notion of the ideal number of children in a population aged from 30 to 49 years: 2.16 and 2.22, respectively. At older ages (50 years and over), the proportion of respondents who think three children to be an the ideal number of children in a family is 10 points higher by comparison with respondents aged 30-49 years, and the average ideal number of children was 2.43. The analysis of populations' notions by sex/age gives grounds to conclude that the social norm for the number of children, while remaining low for the population as a whole, tends to indicate a convergence of the reproductive behaviour of the young, middle, and elderly generations, while no significant differences are observed between females and males (2.00 and 2.04, respectively).

### *Reproductive Orientation by Marital Status*

Reproductive orientations as a function of marital status show the greatest differences between two population groups: the single and the married. Differences in the index of desired number of children are significant: unmarried people wished to have slightly more than one child (1.29), while the desired number of children for married respondents is closer to two children (1.79).

Respondents considering themselves divorced take an intermediate position between the two first groups (see Table 2).

Table 2

Population's opinions on the ideal, desired, and expected number of children. Russia, 1994

	Number of children		
	Ideal	Desired	Expected
Total	2.02	1.65	1.08
Incl.:			
By marital status:			
Single	1.72	1.29	0.89
Married	2.10	1.79	1.21
Divorced	2.03	1.70	0.97
Widowed	2.02	1.26	0.77

### *Reproductive Orientation by Number of Children*

Another demographic characteristic influencing the differentiation in the population's notions of reproductive behaviour is constituted by the presence of children in a respondent's family and their number: the lower the number of a respondent's children, the lower the indices of the ideal, desired, and expected number of children (see Table 3).

Table 3

Population's opinion on the ideal, desired, and expected number of children. Russia, 1994

	Number of children		
	Ideal	Desired	Expected
Total	2.02	1.65	1.08
Incl.:			
By number of children:			
1	1.98	1.74	1.17
2	2.14	1.98	1.41
3 and more	2.94	2.80	1.85

Among respondents having one child, 60 percent consider two children in a family the ideal number, 18 percent think it to be three children. Among respondents having two children, 55 percent call two children the ideal number, and 25 percent say this is three children; of the interviewees who themselves have three or more children, one fifth call two children the ideal number, and one ninth say five or more children are ideal.

*Reproductive Orientation by Level of Education*

One of the social characteristics is the population's level of education. Differentiation as a function of the education level of the respondent varies for the different characteristics of reproductive orientation. Let us review the indices for two groups of the population: those with higher and those with only secondary education. The size of this index is 1.88 and 1.72, respectively. The desired

number of children among people with higher education was somewhat higher than that among people with secondary education.

We are probably dealing with an exaggerated index of the desired number of children. As to the "ideal number of children" index, it is considerably higher for people with secondary education than for people with higher education (2.02 and 1.16, respectively), (see Table 4).



Table 4

Population's opinion on the ideal, desired, and expected number of children. Russia, 1994

	Number of children		
	Ideal	Desired	Expected
Total	2.02	1.65	1.08
Incl.:			
By gender:			
Male	2.00	1.68	1.08
Female	2.04	1.63	1.09
By age:			
Under 29 years	2.16	1.70	1.18
30-49 years	2.22	1.85	1.22
50 years and older	2.43	1.35	0.85
By education:			

Higher/Non-completed higher	1.16	1.88	1.25
Secondary/Secondary special	2.02	1.72	1.17
Below secondary	1.97	1.47	1.00
By marital status:			
Single	1.72	1.29	0.89
Married	2.10	1.79	1.21
Divorced	2.03	1.70	0.97
Widowed	2.02	1.26	0.77
By ethnicity:			
Russian	2.02	1.62	1.09
Native ethnicity	2.06	1.93	1.03

Other	2.12	1.88	1.06
By number of children:			
1	1.98	1.74	1.17
2	2.14	1.98	1.41
3 and more	2.94	2.80	1.85

### *Reproductive Orientation by Types of Settlement and Region*

Reproductive orientations also differ depending on the type of settlement and region where respondents live. Take for example four types of settlement:

- 1) Moscow and St. Petersburg
- 2) Big cities
- 3) District towns
- 4) Rural settlements

Three years ago, in the 1991 survey, there was still some regularity: indices of the ideal, desired, and expected numbers of children rose with growing distance from a capital city and towards rural settlements. In 1994, respondents in Moscow and St. Petersburg voted for higher norms for the number of children, even by comparison with respondents living in the countryside. What can this testify to? First of all, to the fact that residents of capital cities, though actually having a low number of children, wish under ideal circumstances to have higher norms for the number of children; secondly, that the reproductive behaviour of the rural population continues to approach the reproductive behaviour of urban residents.

It is a new feature in the reproductive behaviour that all the indices under examination have decreased for respondents living in big cities and towns at the district level (see Table 5).

Table 5

Population's opinions on the ideal, desirable, and expected number of children. Russia, 1994

	Number of children		
	Ideal	Desired	Expected
Total	2.02	1.65	1.08
Incl.:			
By type of settlement:			
Moscow and St. Petersburg	2.14	1.84	1.28
Big cities	1.96	1.54	1.05
District towns	2.02	1.58	1.02
Rural settlements	2.05	1.77	1.17

The region of residence is of significant importance to differences in the population's opinions on the ideal, desired, and expected number of children. The lowest indices are obtained for respondents living in the North Western region of Russia and in the Urals, which correlates with the actual birth-rate levels in these regions. The maximum values for all three indices are given by respondents living in the North Caucasian region. In the expected number of children category, the index for the Urals region (0.78) is half of that for the North Caucasian region (1.60), but in the latter as well, the index

of the desired number of children does not attain the level necessary for assuring at least elementary reproduction of the population (see Table 6).

Table 6

Population's opinions on the ideal, desirable, and expected number of children, depending on the region of dwelling. Russia, 1994

	North	North West	Central	Volga-Viatka	Central Black Earth	Volga	North Caucasus	Ural	West Siberia	Far East
Ideal number of children	2.0	1.83	1.99	1.97	2.26	2.04	2.19	1.98	1.96	2.06
Desired number of children	1.66	1.59	1.81	1.54	1.52	1.43	2.03	1.43	1.40	2.01
Expected number of children	0.90	0.88	1.41	1.19	1.03	0.88	1.60	0.78	0.88	1.05
Actual	2.07	1.69	1.64	1.74	1.96	1.72	1.95	1.94	1.91	2.08
Are you going to have at least one child born within the coming 2 or 3 years?										
Yes	5.4	5.1	4.6	7.3	1.9	3.9	3.7	4.5	3.7	6.9
More likely yes	3.1	2.5	3.8	0.7	6.9	1.9	4.0	4.6	1.5	1.9
More likely no	3.4	6.9	5.8	4.9	8.6	3.7	5.4	5.5	1.9	2.9
No	67.9	76.6	66.8	76.5	65.3	69.7	76.9	74.3	78.9	79.1
Hard to answer	20.2	8.8	19.0	10.6	17.3	20.8	10.0	11.2	14.0	9.2

If you (or your wife) have an unplanned pregnancy in your family life, what would you most likely do: to give birth to the child or break the pregnancy?										
Give birth to the child	18.9	8.2	16.9	8.8	12.6	9.6	13.5	8.4	12.2	16.8
Break pregnancy	43.8	46.7	35.1	44.0	31.0	33.9	36.3	50.9	41.6	43.9
Hard to answer	37.3	45.2	48.0	47.3	56.4	56.5	50.2	40.6	46.2	39.3

### *Reproductive Orientation by Religion*

Last but not least, there is one greatly important characteristic of the population: attitude towards religion and religious denomination.

In the survey, the questions "Do you believe in God?" and "What is your religion?" were asked. All those who consider themselves believers were registered as believers.<sup>\*)</sup>

In the 1991 survey which embraced the population of the former USSR, a considerable difference was observed between the reproductive attitudes of respondents professing the Orthodox and those professing the Moslem faith. The 1994 survey, which covered only the population of Russia, did not expose significant differences, except in the index for the desired number of children (Orthodox - 1.66, Moslems - 2.34).

### *Reproductive "Plans"*

Reproductive behaviour can be subject to change on various grounds at different stages of the individual's life cycle; for this reason, the respondents' more immediate plans concerning childbirth were determined using the question "Are you going to have at least one more child within the next 2 or 3 years?"

<sup>\*)</sup> In the opinion of those people who go to church and acknowledge the teachings of the church, there are great differences in reproductive behaviour between true believers and those who only consider themselves believers. Our results deal only with those who rank themselves among believers. It is important to bear this in mind when interpreting the survey's results.

On the average over the whole of Russia, only 4.5% of respondents answered "Yes", including 5% among males and 4% among females; affirmative answers by married and unmarried people coincide, being 6% in both groups; among believers they are about 4% and among non-believers - 5.6%. Less than 2% (the lowest index in all the regions of Russia) are going to have another child in the Central Black Earth region of Russia and the highest percentage of "No" (about 8%) is in the Far East and Western Siberia.

A cause of special concern is, in our opinion, the firm resolution by three-quarters of respondents among the rural population not to have any more children in the coming 2 or 3 years.

Among young people under 29, the number of those who wished to have a child within the coming 2 or 3 years is at its greatest, but the proportion of these does not exceed 13 per cent of the number of all those who gave answers and is exceeded three times over by the proportion of respondents within this age group who do not think it possible for themselves to have a child within the coming several years (see Table 7).



Table 7

Answers to question "Are you (and your wife) going to have at least one more child born within the coming 2 or 3 years (besides those already born)? Russia, 1994

	(Percent of those who gave answers)				
	Yes	More likely yes	More likely no	No	Hard to answer
	4.5	3.1	4.7	73.1	14.5
Total:					
Incl.					
By age:					
> 29 years	13.4	8.3	9.3	41.4	7.2
30-49 years	2.5	2.4	5.6	82.4	7.2
50 years and older	0.0	0.0	0.0	86.4	13.7
By social status and occupation:					
Managers	6.5	5.0	6.9	72.5	9.2
Specialists	7.6	6.4	7.5	68.6	10.0
Employees	5.9	2.9	3.7	75.9	11.7

Skilled blue-collar workers	5.3	3.5	5.1	74.7	11.4
Unskilled workers	3.0	1.6	4.5	74.8	16.1
By gender:					
Male	5.3	3.4	4.5	69.9	16.9
Female	3.9	2.9	4.9	75.9	12.5
By marital status:					
Single	5.7	2.3	3.0	48.9	40.1
Married	5.0	3.8	5.9	77.9	7.5
Divorced	2.3	3.1	2.4	77.7	14.5
Widowed	0.1	0.8	0.9	79.9	18.5

In their resolute "No" to childbirth, respondents express their attitudes towards the difficulties of present-day socioeconomic and political life in the country.

This intention may ultimately lead to de facto refusal on the part of some families to have any more children (more accurately, one should speak, initially, of refusal to have a second, third or

subsequent child, but not of refusal to have a first child).

### *Attitudes to Unplanned Pregnancies and Abortion*

The following question served as an additional check on the reproductive intentions of respondents: "If you (or your wife) have an unplanned pregnancy in your family life, what would you most likely do?" On the average over the whole of Russia, the answers were distributed as follows: "Would give birth to the child" - 12.6%, "Would terminate the pregnancy" - 40%, "Hard to answer" - 47.3%.

Since four-fifths of all pregnancies nowadays involve women aged under 29, the correlation of answers at 1:3 in favour of abortion coincides with answers of respondents aged under 29 to the preceding question, i.e. that they do not think it possible for them to have another child in the coming 2 or 3 years. In the age group up to 49 years, the proportion of respondents willing to prevent childbirth increases twofold.

The answers about abortion were not influenced by respondents' ethnicity; readiness to use this method is frequently mentioned by residents of the Urals and North West of Russia, where reproductive attitude indices are the lowest. A comparative analysis of the results of the 1991 and 1994 surveys shows that the proportion of those willing to go ahead with a pregnancy has dropped by almost half (from 23 to 12.6%).

The 1994 survey reveals that family planning through abortion has reached the same level in the countryside as in the capital cities: 41 and 40 per cent, respectively (see Table 8).

Table 8

The ideal, desired and expected number of children depending on the type of settlement. Russia, 1994

	Moscow & St. Petersburg	Big towns	Small towns	Villages
Ideal number of children	2.14	1.96	2.02	2.05
Desired number of children	1.84	1.54	1.58	1.77
Expected number of children	1.28	1.05	1.02	1.17
Actual	1.58	1.69	1.89	2.02

Are you going to have at least one more child born within the coming 2 or 3 years?				
Yes	6.37	4.36	4.30	4.44
More likely yes	3.97	3.69	3.18	2.28
More likely no	6.36	5.62	4.08	4.30
No	65.79	69.29	75.88	75.09
Hard to answer	17.50	17.04	12.55	13.90
If you (your wife) have an unplanned pregnancy in your family life, what would you most likely do: to give birth to the child or break the pregnancy?				
Give birth to the child	17.45	14.84	10.17	12.19
Break the pregnancy	39.67	37.43	41.69	41.13
Hard to answer	42.89	47.73	48.14	46.68

The 1994 survey also indicates that a large number of people cannot give a definite answer: 51 per cent among the orthodox and 71 per cent among Moslems found it difficult to say what they would do in the case of an unplanned pregnancy. (See Table 9).

Table 9

Reproductive attitudes depending on confession. Russia, 1994

	Orthodox	Moslem	Believers	Non-believers
Ideal number of children	2.05	2.11	2.05	2.03
Desired number of children	1.66	2.34	1.7	1.6
Expected number of children	1.12	1.27	1.12	1.27
Actual	1.57	2.45	1.84	1.84
Are you going to have at least one more child born within the coming 2 or 3 years?				
Yes	3.64	2.75	3.74	5.60
More likely yes	2.93	2.16	2.77	3.58
More likely no	5.09	3.99	4.93	4.23
No	73.88	79.71	74.09	71.44
Hard to answer	14.46	11.40	14.47	15.16
If you (your wife) have an unplanned pregnancy in your family life, what would you most likely do: to give birth to the child or break the pregnancy?				

Give birth to the child	13.16	10.73	13.41	12.11
Break pregnancy	35.66	18.51	34.95	43.84
Hard to answer	51.18	70.75	51.64	44.05

### Socioeconomic Factors of Reproductive Behaviour

*As noted by scholars of the population's reproductive behaviour, reproductive attitudes are determined to a greater extent by value orientations than by other factors. Nevertheless, attitudes to the number of children at any concrete moment are influenced by the population's living conditions, though this impact realizes itself not in a direct way but through a subjective evaluation of the material conditions of the family's life. In the survey, the population's opinions concerning both common factors forming the material conditions and more particular attitudes picturing the objective characteristics of the conditions of a family's life were investigated. Answers to the question "What could now primarily help increase the number of children in families like yours?" help us to understand what problems are most significant to a family from the viewpoint of reproductive attitudes. Confidence in the future is the number one problem in our unstable times. The second problem, following the first with only an insignificant gap, is how to ameliorate the material situation of the family by creating possibilities to earn as much as necessary to maintain the family (40 per cent of those who gave answers). By now, every second respondent aged under 49, irrespective of sex, holds the same opinion.*

*In third place on the problem scale respondents place the need for a significant amelioration in housing conditions, this problem being twice as acute in the larger cities as in the countryside. The population realizes that, in order to solve the family's private problems, the economic situation in general must first be improved (4th place).*

*No significant mention was made of the usual complex of state assistance measures to families, even under conditions of a deterioration in the material situation in 1994 as compared with 1991: 8 per cent of respondents were in favour of extending paid maternity leave; 14 per cent advocated the introduction of significant bonus payments on the birth of a child; 18 per cent voted for introduction of monthly allowances for children until the age of 16, with white-collar employees (23%) and unskilled manual workers (22%) more frequently calling for the introduction of this measure of assistance to families. We may conclude that the population is more*

willing to act in the direction of self-support than to rely on state assistance, though it does not reject such help from the state.

In the opinion of 13 percent of those who gave answers, nothing under the present conditions can favour an increase in the number of children in a family.

In order to clarify what socio-demographic conditions may favour childbirth in a family, not in general but within the coming 2 or 3 years, the question was asked "What can primarily help your decision to give birth to at least one child within the coming 2 or 3 years?".

Every fifth respondent is convinced that his/her decision cannot be affected by any external conditions, the decision to have a child being firm. The same number of respondents (19.5%) would be willing to have a child in the near term given conditions of confidence in the future and good earnings (17.5%). By comparison with 1991, the threat of unemployment has risen in 1994, and almost 7 per cent of respondents connect their unwillingness to have a child with uncertainty about their jobs, young people under 29 years expressing this opinion 1.5 times more frequently than the population in general.

More state assistance to families takes only fifth place as a factor stimulating the decision to increase the number of children, following the perceived need for a reduction in the rate of food price increases.

Thus, at the present stage, economic factors are, in the respondents' opinion, the decisive element in the realization of a family's need for children.

In this report we do not dwell on behavioural aspects that, in our opinion, enables us to understand more deeply why families with similar living conditions have different numbers of children, different stability of marriage, different desired and expected numbers of children in the family; neither do we consider the population's orientation in terms of family and extra-family values since these questions were not asked of the respondents because of financial limitations.

To conclude, we should note the fact that the present stage in Russia's development is characterized by increasing vulnerability of families, and still less liberty in the realization of one of the family's principal functions, i.e. the reproductive function.

#### **IV. Is a Demographic Policy Necessary?**

To investigate the population's opinion on the necessity of a demographic policy concerning the birth rate, the question was asked: "Do you think that some urgent measures should now be undertaken in Russia to regulate the birth rate?"

More than half of those interviewed (54.6%) voted for urgent measures directed towards increasing the birth rate, almost one out of five (19.5%) thinks that everything should stay as it is, and almost 2 per cent were in favour of a decrease in the birth rate, while every fourth respondent found it difficult to answer this question.

Public opinion calls for urgent measures to raise the birth rate, both in the big cities (63%) and in the rural settlements (50%); more often these opinions are voiced by the married and

*divorced than by the unmarried, both males (53%) and females (36%).*

*Among the 1.7 per cent of respondents who see a need to lower the birth rate, there are twice as many males as females, young people under 29 and single, villagers 2 times more frequently than citizens living in Moscow and St. Petersburg.*

## **V. Principal Conclusions**

- 1. The results of the study have shown that the low reproductive orientations typical of the overwhelming majority of Russia's population are being aggravated by peculiarities of the present socioeconomic and political situation of the country.*
- 2. The lowest indices of reproductive attitudes are found in the Urals and North Eastern region of Russia.*
- 3. The population realizes that without radical economic reform and political stability it is difficult to gain confidence in the future and to perceive opportunities to earn enough to maintain a family with children and to plan having children within the coming two or three years.*
- 4. The population does not consider the complex of family benefits, whether actually existing or which could potentially be offered by the government, to be effective with a view to changing the population's reproductive attitudes.*
- 5. Public opinion expresses fear of actually having the desired and expected number of children because of lack of confidence in the future and the inability to earn enough to maintain a family with children.*
- 6. Under the existing conditions, it is obviously impossible to consider the material benefits granted by the state to be measures of demographic policy. They are instead to be viewed as family-assistance policy measures oriented towards the basic survival of families with children.*
- 7. In order to know the exact interests of various groups of families with children under rapidly changing conditions and to keep in touch with reproductive attitudes, it would be necessary to conduct monitoring studies on an annual basis.*



Valentina Bodrova

## *Reproductive Behaviour of Russia's Population in the Transition Period*

*Bericht des BIOst Nr. 15/1995*

### Summary

#### Introductory Remarks

*The demographic situation in Russia has long presented a complicated picture. At the present time, it is characterized by an accelerating decline in fertility in the nineties; a rise in the mortality indices, especially among men of working age and deaths of non-natural causes; stabilization of infant mortality indices at a high level; a rise in childbirth mortality; an increase in the number of divorces, coupled with a drop in the number of marriages; an increase in the number of single parents, who are now rearing about 4 million children under age; an absolute reduction in population numbers in the country since 1992.*

#### Findings

*The results of the study "Reproductive behaviour of Russia's Population" 1994 show that the low reproductive orientations typical of the overwhelming majority of Russia's population are being aggravated by peculiarities of the present socioeconomic and political situation of the country.*

*The lowest indices of reproductive attitudes are found in the Urals and North Eastern region of Russia.*

*The population realizes that without radical economic reform and political stability it is difficult to gain confidence in the future and to perceive opportunities to earn enough to maintain a family with children and to plan having children within the coming two or three years.*

*The population does not consider the complex of family benefits, whether actually existing or which could potentially be offered by the government, to be effective with a view to changing the population's reproductive attitudes.*

*Public opinion expresses fear of actually having the desired and expected number of children because of lack of confidence in the future and the inability to earn enough to maintain a family with children.*

*Under the existing conditions, it is obviously impossible to consider the material benefits granted by the state to be measures of demographic policy. They are instead to be viewed as family-assistance policy measures oriented towards the basic survival of families with children.*

*In order to know the exact interests of various groups of families with children under rapidly changing conditions and to keep in touch with reproductive attitudes, it would be necessary to conduct monitoring studies on an annual basis.*